

Communications Strategy
Release of
EC 1105-2-409 Planning in a Collaborative Environment
(24 June 2005)

Project: To manage the communications involved with the public release of EC 1105-2-409, Planning in a Collaborative Environment. This circular sets formal processes and guidance for all levels of USACE for collaborative planning of projects and studies related to the water resources mission. The circular also provides Congress, the administration, other agencies, stakeholders, critics and the public with information about the formal processes to be used by the Corps for collaborative planning – an area that has received a great deal of attention in the media in recent years because of concerns raised within Congress and by critics of the Corps. The two-year implementation of the circular will provide the Corps with valuable operational information/lessons learned as it works toward the development of a final engineer regulation on this topic.

EC 1105-2-409 is being released concurrently with EC 1105-2-408 Peer Review of Decision Documents. A single press release will announce the publication of both circulars.

Purpose/Intent:

1. This strategy will provide talking points, a news release, and questions and answers associated with the release of EC 1105-2-409, Planning in a Collaborative Environment.
2. Some national news coverage of the release is expected, as the topic addressed in the circular has been of interest in past media coverage. Primary interest will be from publications that have demonstrated prior interest in the Corps' planning processes. Environmental and trade press can also be expected to be interested in the circular.
3. The release of this circular can also be expected to generate potential news releases from organizations that traditionally critique USACE planning processes for not taking the process far enough to address all their concerns.
4. Distribution of a USACE news release announcing the publication of the circulars and addressing their purposes and benefits as they relate to the execution of the water resources mission will enable the Corps to get out its initial message points prior to potential releases by other organizations.
5. The following is the proposed course of action:
 - First, details about the two circulars will be briefed to the House and Senate Energy and Water Authorizing Committees staffs.
 - Second, USACE Public Affairs will distribute pre-approved talking points and questions and answers to all Corps public affairs officers approximately 24-48 hours prior to the public release of the circulars.
 - Third, USACE Public Affairs will issue a news release announcing the release of the circulars and will be prepared to respond to media queries.
 - Fourth, USACE Directorate of Civil Works will post the circulars to the web and to the Hot Topics page concurrently with the time of the news release.
 - Fifth, the Office of Management and Budget and appropriate federal principals/agencies (to include the National Research Council) will be notified concurrent with the release of the circulars.
 - Sixth, project sponsors, other stakeholders and national organizations that are affiliated with Corps issues (Nature Conservancy, American Rivers, National Wildlife Federation, floodplain managers, ports, other navigation interests, etc.) will be notified about the availability of the circulars concurrent with their release.
 - Seventh, designated CW staff principals must be prepared to support USACE PAO in responding to media queries about the circulars. The queries will primarily be telephonic and calls may come from all over the nation.
 - Eighth, an internal USACE training plan to familiarize all levels of the Corps with the new ECs will be developed, distributed and executed by Harry Kitch.

Communications Matrix - (Release 27 JUN 05)

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE/TIME ACTION IS TO OCCUR	METHOD OF ACTION	DATE ACTION OCCURED
Brief ASA(CW) on report	Harry Kitch	29 APR 05	In person	29 APR 05
Brief House Authorization Committee staff	Harry Kitch	6 JUN 05	In person	6 JUN 05
Brief Senate Authorization Committee staff	Harry Kitch	16 JUN 05	In person	16 JUN 05
Distribute communications strategy to all USACE PAOs	Gene Pawlik	24 JUN 05	Email	24 JUN 05
Distribute new release	Gene Pawlik	27 JUN 05 – 0900	USNEWswire/ USACE web	
Post circulars to USACE web/ Hot Topics	Harry Kitch/ IM	27 JUN 05 – 0900	Internet	
Notify other appropriate federal agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dept. of Interior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.S. Fish and Wildlife - U.S. Geological Survey - U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - U.S. National Park Service - Bureau of Indian Affairs - U.S. Bureau of Land Management ● Dept. of Commerce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NOAA - National Marine Fisheries Service ● EPA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office of Federal Activities - Office of Water ● Dept. of Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maritime Administration - Federal Highways Admin. ● Dept. of Housing and Urban Development ● Dept. of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Resources Conservation Service - U.S. Forest Service ● Dept. of Homeland Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FEMA - U.S. Coast Guard 	Gene Pawlik	27 JUN 05 following news release/web posting	Email copy of news release	
Notify National Research Council	Harry Kitch/ Bruce Carlson	27 JUN 05 -	email	

Notify associated national organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Society of Civil Engineers • American Water Resources Association • American Association of Port Authorities • American Planning Assoc. • Association of State Floodplain Managers • The Nature Conservancy • American Rivers • National Wildlife Federation • Audubon Society • Sierra Club • MARC 2000 • National Recreation and Park Association • American Recreation Coalition • Association of Marina Industries • Tread Lightly, Inc. • International Mountain Biking Association • National Association of State Park Directors • Association of Partners for Public Lands 	Gene Pawlik	27 JUN 05 following news release/web posting	Email copy of news release	
Notify appropriate project sponsors/stakeholders	MSCs/ districts	Beginning 27 JUN 05 following news release	Various – district discretion	
Brief Office of Management and Budget	Harry Kitch/ Doug Lamont	18 JUL 05 - 1400	In person	

Talking Points:

General (applicable to both ECs)

1. The publication of the Peer Review of Decision Documents and Planning in a Collaborative Environment engineer circulars represents a significant step forward for formalizing improved planning and decision processes within the USACE Civil Works program.
2. The guidance contained within the Peer Review of Decision Documents and Planning in a Collaborative Environment engineer circulars will provide USACE, Congress, other federal agencies, stakeholders and the public with a greater understanding of the Civil Works program and will set expectations for how the program will be conducted.
3. Implementing the guidance contained within the Peer Review of Decision Documents and Planning in a Collaborative Environment engineer circulars will enhance the nation's confidence in the quality and credibility of its Civil Works program.

4. Publication of engineer circulars provides USACE with a two-year window to operate under the principles and guidelines of the circulars; the flexibility to change and adapt during that timeframe as lessons are learned and greater efficiencies are found; and to apply the lessons learned toward the development of final engineer regulations to be published after the circulars expire.

EC 1105-2-409 Planning in a Collaborative Environment

1. The Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC reflects improvements to the Corps' approach to water resources planning and is designed to facilitate problem solving and decision making for specific projects as well as a more collaborative and systems-based approach to working with other federal and state agencies in developing solutions that integrate programs, policies, and projects across public agencies.
2. Collaboration is the keystone of the Corps watershed approach and is essential to the success of watershed scale or systems-based planning. Collaborative planning with other federal agencies and Tribes requires the Corps to move beyond the traditional Corps interests and embrace solutions that reflect the full range of the Federal interest.
3. Bringing together the expertise and programs of all the appropriate federal agencies in collaborative planning will ensure problems are solved at the proper scale, that solutions are integrated across purposes and business programs, and will more effectively leverage federal and other funds.
4. The EC encourages the Corps and its partners to address water resources problems in a much broader context, addressing a wide range of objectives. The Principles and Guidelines provide an evaluation framework for assessing effects under the four accounts of National Economic Development (NED), Environmental Quality (EQ), Regional Economic Development (RED) and Other Social Effects (OSE). The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) retains the prerogative of determining if a waiver from selection of the NED plan is warranted.
5. Reconnaissance and feasibility studies will be completed within three years beginning with the first obligation of study (General Investigation) funds and ending on the date of the signing of the Chief of Engineers Report, assuming necessary funds are made available.
6. The circular's guidance will be applied to all studies for which a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement has not yet been signed.

Q&As:

Q: What is the purpose of the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC?

A: The purpose of the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC is to provide revised procedures for the conduct of Corps water resources planning and the preparation of feasibility-level (decision) reports that require authorization by the United States Congress and those that are approved under delegated authority.

Q: Why is USACE implementing changes to its planning processes in EC 1105-2-409?

A: The Corps' traditional approach to water resources planning was designed to facilitate problem solving and decision making for specific sites and projects. Today, the Corps is being asked to use its planning capability to facilitate, convene, advise, and to work collaboratively with other federal and state programs in developing solutions that integrate programs, policies, and projects across public agencies. As a result, the Corps has developed this circular to reemphasize current guidance or provide improvements to the Corps' planning in a collaborative environment.

Q: What studies are affected by implementation of the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC?

A: The guidance in the circular is effective immediately and will be applied to all studies for which a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement has not yet been signed. The principles and intent of the circular's guidance should be applied to the fullest degree possible to all studies.

Q: What specific Civil Works planning improvements are contained within EC 1105-2-409?

A: The circular establishes provisions to improve the Corps' Civil Works collaborative planning process in five major areas: (1) timeframe for conduct of reconnaissance and feasibility studies; (2) federal interest; (3) plan selection; (4) natural resources mitigation; and, (5) monitoring and adaptive management.

Q: What guidance does the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC provide for the timeframe to conduct reconnaissance and feasibility studies?

A: Reconnaissance and feasibility studies will be completed within three years beginning with the first obligation of study (General Investigation) funds and ending on the date of the signing of the Chief of Engineers Report, assuming necessary funds are made available. Feasibility studies will be accomplished with a level of analysis sufficient to provide a reasonable number of alternatives for decision-making.

Q: Are there exceptions to the three-year study completion rule?

A. The requirement to complete studies in three years applies only to project-scale planning for implementation studies and does not apply to watershed studies or other more comprehensive planning activities. In those cases where more than three years are necessary, a USACE vertical team comprised of district, division and headquarters representatives will review the Project Management Plan to determine if an exception is appropriate. The USACE Planning Community of Practice leader will approve any exceptions.

Q: What guidance does the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC provide for USACE's collaborative planning with other federal interests?

A: Collaboration is the keystone of the Corps' watershed approach and is essential to the success of watershed scale planning. Collaborative planning with other federal agencies and Tribes requires the Corps to move beyond its interests and to embrace solutions that reflect the full range of the national federal interest (the collection of all responsibilities assigned to federal agencies). Collaborative planning in Corps studies may result in a plan with components to be implemented by the Corps, other federal, state and local agencies, and result in a more coordinated and thus more streamlined regulatory process. The Corps will also participate as a team member in collaborative planning in other federal, state or local agencies planning activities where there may be no expectation of Corps construction or other work.

Q: Whom does USACE expect to partner with in the collaborative planning effort?

A: Collaborative planning will involve not only traditional non-federal cost sharing sponsors in partnership with the Corps, but also representatives from other federal, state and local agencies who will bring expertise, programs and projects to study teams.

Q: Why is collaborative planning important to the federal interest?

A: Bringing together the expertise and programs of all the appropriate federal agencies in collaborative planning will ensure problems are solved at the proper scale, that solutions address a wide range of objectives and are integrated across purposes and business programs, and will more effectively leverage federal and other funds.

Q: What guidance does the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC provide for USACE plan selection?

A: All Corps planning studies will evaluate, display and compare the full range of alternative plans' effects across all four Principles and Guidelines' accounts (National Economic Development (NED), Environmental Quality (EQ), Regional Economic Development (RED) and Other Social Effects (OSE)). Planning reports will include a full discussion and display of the

beneficial and adverse effects of each plan, and a comparison of costs and effects among plans as well as cumulative effects.

Q: What criteria will USACE use for the plan selection process?

A: The set of alternative plans judged to have net beneficial effects across the four Principles and Guidelines accounts (based on analyses and collaborative judgment) will be candidates for selection. Conversely, a plan will be dropped from further consideration if it does not, on balance, have net beneficial effects after considering its beneficial and adverse effects across all four accounts. Plans may be judged, on balance, to have net beneficial effects when, given the full range of effects in all four accounts, no other alternative plan or scale has a higher excess of beneficial effects over total adverse effects. The key to making a judgment is in identifying and fully describing the best reasonable mix of beneficial effects at a reasonable cost.

Q: What elements must a USACE planning report contain?

A: Planning reports will clearly present the responsibilities of the various parties and the funding they will contribute. Appropriate agreements must also be proposed to assure necessary investments and actions to achieve expected benefits are agreed upon

Each planning report must also identify, in addition to the alternative of taking no action (that is, the “future without condition”), the following plans at a minimum from the set of alternatives judged to have net beneficial effects:

- (1) Locally preferred plan(s) if requested by a non-federal cost-sharing sponsor.
- (2) National interest plan(s) address one or more products or services that reflect the full range of the federal interest as defined in the study authorities and public laws, executive orders, and other statements of the Administration and the Congress.
- (3) Nonstructural Plan(s) include only modifications in public policy, management practice, regulatory policy and pricing policy.

Q: Who is responsible for choosing one of the candidate plans in USACE planning reports?

A: The reporting offices (district, MSC, and HQ) are responsible for selecting any one of the candidate plans in the planning report. The report will explain the rationale and basis for selection considering the beneficial and adverse effects in all four accounts.

Q: What guidance does the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC provide for natural resources mitigation?

A: The circular restates and reemphasizes the guidance contained in Engineer Regulation 1105-2-100, Planning Guidance Notebook, which presents mitigation planning as an integral part of the overall planning process. The key principles for mitigation are to (1) avoid impact altogether; (2) minimize impact; (3) rectify the impact by repairing, rehabilitating or restoring the affected environment; (4) reduce or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and (5) compensate for impact by replacing in-kind fish and wildlife resources or by substituting out-of-kind fish and wildlife resources or environments that are at least equal in value and significance as the lost resources.

Q: When does USACE expect mitigation to be accomplished with respect to project completion?

A: The Corps’ intent is for mitigation to be completed prior to or concurrent with a project’s completion date. In those exceptional instances in which it is not technically practicable to complete mitigation concurrent with the last day of project construction, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) will complete the required mitigation as soon as possible.

Q: What are the district commanders responsible for in natural resources mitigation?

A: District commanders shall ensure that project-caused adverse impacts to ecological resources have been avoided or minimized to the extent practicable, and that remaining, unavoidable impacts have been compensated to the extent justified and have no more than negligible adverse impacts on the ecological resources. Each district commander will also report annually on the

status of mitigation for all projects that are under construction; all projects for which the president requests funding for the next fiscal year; and all projects that have completed construction, but have not completed the mitigation required under section 906 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986.

Q: What guidance does the Planning in a Collaborative Environment EC provide for monitoring and adaptive management?

A: Engineer Regulation 1105-2-100, Planning Guidance Notebook, contains the current monitoring and adaptive management policy. Adaptive management addresses the uncertainties about a water resource project's actual performance that exist when implementation decisions are made to undertake water resources projects. This technique allows decision making and implementation to proceed with the understanding that outputs will be assessed and evaluated and that some structural or operational changes to the project may be necessary to achieve the desired results. Adaptive management is not a substitute for good planning or a vehicle for research.

Q: Why is monitoring critical to the success of the adaptive management program?

A: Carefully designed monitoring programs that may begin during construction and continue for a specified time after construction are the heart of the adaptive management program. The purpose of any type of monitoring is to determine if the outputs/results are satisfactory, and to determine if any adjustments to the project elements/measures should be made.

Q: Where should the anticipated need for adaptive management be identified?

A: If the need for a specified adjustment is anticipated due to high uncertainty in achieving the desired outputs/results, the nature and cost of such actions should be explicitly described in the specifically authorized project's decision document. The adaptive management plan may be shown as a contingency item.

Q: How is adaptive management funded?

A: Any expenditure made under the adaptive management plan will be cost shared with the non-federal sponsor. If the results of the monitoring program support the need for adaptive management, the costs for any specified adjustment should not exceed three percent of the total project cost excluding the monitoring costs.



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers formalizes and improves its peer review and collaborative planning processes with the release of two new engineer circulars

Washington (June 27, 2005) - The United States Army Corps of Engineers today released two engineer circulars that will formalize and improve the peer review and collaborative planning processes used by the Corps in its performance of the nation's Civil Works program.

Engineer Circular 1105-2-408, Peer Review of Decision Documents, and Engineer Circular 1105-2-409, Planning in a Collaborative Environment, both dated 31 May 2005, provide all levels of the Corps with formal guidance on how peer review and collaboration are to be implemented and integrated in the Civil Works program. The circulars will also provide external stakeholders and the general public with a greater understanding of the processes the Corps will use in the future execution of the Civil Works mission.

"The publication of the peer review and collaborative planning circulars are important steps in the Corps' ongoing efforts to find ways to more effectively serve the nation," said Maj. Gen. Don T. Riley, USACE's Director of Civil Works.

"The circulars are the result of the Corps taking a hard look at its internal processes and in listening to our external stakeholders about critical issues that need to be addressed in the Civil Works program," added Riley. "Implementing the guidance in the circulars will help to maintain and improve the confidence of our many partners and the American public in the credibility and quality of the program."

Publication of engineer circulars provides USACE with a two-year window to operate under the procedures in the circulars, while also providing flexibility to change and adapt as lessons are learned and greater efficiencies are found during that time frame.

Both the Peer Review of Decision Documents and the Planning in a Collaborative Environment circulars are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2007, at which time the Corps expects to publish a final engineer regulation that will incorporate the lessons learned while operating under the circulars.

Peer Review of Decision Documents

Engineer Circular 1105-2-408, Peer Review of Decision Documents, presents a framework for establishing the appropriate level and independence of review for decision documents covered by the circular.

The circular applies to the review of "scientific information", "influential scientific information", "scientific assessment", and "highly influential scientific assessment" as defined in the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. This includes

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers releases Peer Review of Decision Documents and Planning in a Collaborative Environment engineer circulars/2-2-2

factual inputs, data, the use of models, analyses, assumptions, and other scientific and engineering matters that inform decision-making.

In the Corps, this typically includes but is not limited to: economic and environmental assumptions and projections, evaluation data, economic analyses, environmental analyses, engineering analyses (including hydrology and hydraulics, geotechnical, structural, etc.), methods for integrating risk and uncertainty and for conducting trade-offs, and the use of models in the evaluation of engineering, economic and environmental effects.

The circular does not apply to policy determinations and reviews, and agency exercise of discretionary authority that are beyond the scope of scientific and engineering peer review. Policy review remains a USACE and Army responsibility.

The Peer Review of Decision Documents circular provides guidance for when external peer review is to be added to the Corps' existing independent technical review (ITR) and legal and policy compliance review processes.

ITR is an ongoing part of the Corps' planning process intended to confirm that technical work is done in accordance with clearly established professional principles, practices, codes and criteria. A qualified person or team not involved in the day-to-day technical work supporting the development of a decision document performs ITR. Experts from other agencies, universities and consultants are often involved as well.

External peer review is added in those special cases where the risk and magnitude of a proposed project are such that a critical examination by a qualified person or team outside of the Corps – and not involved in the day-to-day production of a technical product – is necessary.

External peer review will be conducted to identify, explain and comment upon assumptions that underlie economic, engineering, and environmental analyses, as well as to evaluate the soundness of models and planning methods. It will also be added in cases where information is based on novel methods; presents complex challenges for interpretation; contains precedent-setting methods or models; presents conclusions that are likely to change prevailing practices; or is likely to affect policy decisions that have a significant impact.

Planning in a Collaborative Environment

Engineer Circular 1105-2-409, Planning in a Collaborative Environment, reflects improvements to the Corps' approach to water resources planning. It is designed to facilitate problem solving and decision making for specific projects as well as a more collaborative and systems-based approach to working with other federal and state agencies in developing solutions that integrate programs, policies, and projects across public agencies.

"This document is a significant update of the Corps' planning guidance," said Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works John Paul Woodley, Jr. "It reflects a watershed-level approach in examining the Nation's water resources needs and is predicated on fully collaborative efforts, in the broadest context possible, by project sponsors, state and federal agencies, and other stakeholders necessary to bring these projects to fruition."

Collaboration is the keystone of the Corps' watershed approach and is essential to the success of watershed scale planning. Collaborative planning will involve not only traditional non-federal cost sharing sponsors in partnership with the Corps, but also representatives from other federal, state and local agencies and Tribes who will bring expertise, programs and projects to study teams.

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers releases Peer Review of Decision Documents and Planning in a Collaborative Environment engineer circulars/3-3-3

Collaborative planning in Corps studies may lead to a more coordinated and streamlined regulatory process, and in a plan with components to be implemented by the Corps and other federal, state and local agencies. The Corps will also participate as a team member in other federal, state or local agencies collaborative planning activities where there may be no expectation of Corps construction or other work.

Collaborative planning will ensure problems are solved at the proper scale with integrated agency purposes, and will more effectively leverage federal and other funds.

Engineer Circular 1105-2-408, Peer Review of Decision Documents, and Engineer Circular 1105-2-409, Planning in a Collaborative Environment, can be accessed on the web at <http://www.usace.army.mil/publications/eng-circulars/ec-cw.html>.

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For additional information about the United States Army Corps of Engineers, please visit our new web page at www.usace.army.mil.